saalt
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER

Strengthening South Asian Communities in America

SAALT welcomes the 2017-2018 Young Leaders Institute and this year's theme: *Combating Islamophobia*

From July 19-21, SAALT welcomed the 2017-2018 class of the Young Leaders Institute (YLI) at a convening in Silver Spring, Maryland. This year marks the sixth cohort of young adults SAALT has trained in leadership skills for social change on campus and in our communities. The 2017-2018 cohort includes 16 outstanding, diverse youth who have developed creative and thoughtful projects focused on this year's theme of ***Combating Islamophobia*** in South Asian American communities and broadly through civic engagement.

Following a competitive application process, YLI Fellows took part in a three-day training workshop where they learned the history of immigration and Islamophobia in America, built organizing and direct action skills, connected with activists and mentors, and explored social change strategies around issues that affect South Asian and immigrant communities in the United States. Learn more about each Fellow's respective YLI project here. See pictures from the convening here.

SAALT is thankful to the trainers who provided vital insights at the YLI convening, including Dr. Maha Hilal (Institute for Policy Studies); Terri Johnson (Center for New Community); Noor Mir (D.C. Justice for Muslims Coalition); and Darakshan Raja (Washington Peace Center).

"I had an amazing experience at YLI," stated Shilpa, one of SAALT's YLI Fellows. "I met a great community of South Asians committed to social justice and combating various forms of oppression in the community. I also heard from amazing organizers who taught us about direct action, the history of the war on terror, and how we can move forward within our communities. Going forward I want to carry all that knowledge with me back to Georgetown and build communities of South Asians committed to social justice on my campus."

Check out this video on Islamophobia and how the Young Leaders Institute empowers young people to combat it on campus and in their communities.

Sania, another YLI Fellow, noted, "The reason I took part in the Young Leaders Institute is because when I'm older I want to be involved in community organizing. YLI was the perfect first step in finding my way there."

Rakin, a YLI Fellow who will work to repeal House Bill 522, an anti-Sharia legislation in North Carolina, stated, "Through YLI, I was able to gain access to educational resources that helped contextualize what it means to be a South Asian in America. YLI helped me understand the broader history and dynamics of the South Asian American identity.